

# Fire Island Photo Interpretation Key

Class: *Spartina patens*- *Distichlis spicata* Tidal  
Herbaceous Alliance (Spartina High Salt Marsh)

TNC Alliance Code: V. A. 5 N. n. 11. 6006

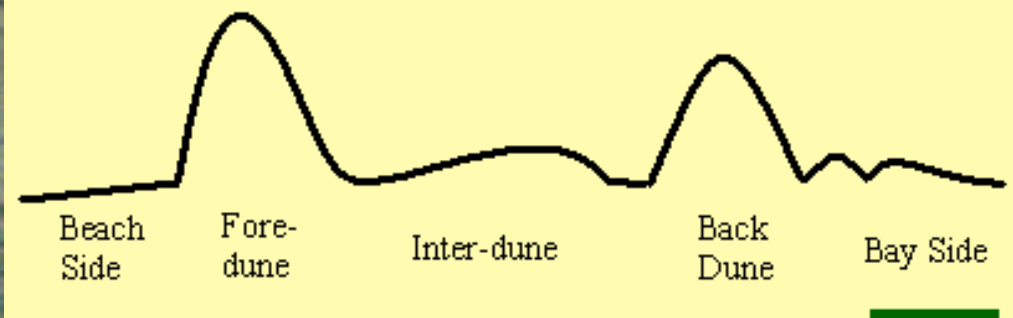
CMI Code: 6006



## Island Locator:

Fire Island and Floyd Estate  
occurs generally along bay side of island  
and along other protected shores

## Cross Section:



**TNC Alliance Description:** This high salt marsh vegetation occurs above low salt marsh on the bay side of barrier beaches. The substrate is characterized by shallow peat over sand. High salt marsh vegetation occurs between low salt marsh and maritime forest or maritime shrubland. *Distichlis spicata* and *Spartina patens* are co-dominant and often form dense cover. *Salicornia* spp. can form dense patches and *Spartina*

*alterniflora* often occurs as scattered clumps. *Limonium carolinianum* and *Solidago sempervirens* can occur sporadically

**Photo Interpretation:** This association dominates the salt marshes of Fire Island and the Floyd Estate. It is found in close proximity to *Spartina alterniflora* on the less-frequently flooded portions of the salt marsh. This type has a uniform tan color and is often bisected by mosquito ditches (which dry the areas further).

**Aerial Photo Sample:**



Spartina high salt marsh on right side (outlined in red), with Spartina low salt marsh and bay on the left side of photo.



**Field Notes:** Dominated by *Distichlis spicata* (wiry appearance) or *Spartina patens* (matted appearance), and forming dense mats in tidal flats. Often adjacent to *Spartina alterniflora* Herbaceous Alliance, which occurs closer to shore.

**Ground Photos:**



*D. spicata* close-up (note wiry appearance).



*S. patens* on left (note matted appearance), *S. alterniflora* on right of photo.

**Similar Alliances:** *Spartina alterniflora* /(*Ascophyllum nodosum*) Acadian/Virginian Zone Herbaceous  
**Vegetation:** Dominated by *Spartina alterniflora* rather than *S. patens* or *Distichlis spicata*. *S. alterniflora* is a taller, broader leaved grass than either *S. patens* or *D. spicata*. Occurs in lower salt marshes and is flooded more regularly than this alliance. Limited to the zone between mean sea level and mean high water level.

In aerial photos, the *S. alterniflora* alliance appears darker than *S. patens* or *D. spicata* with a smooth texture. Often located between this alliance and the ocean/bay. See above photo for field comparison.

